

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-07

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 EUR-08 IO-06 NSCE-00 INR-05
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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9826
AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY JIDDA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY BONN PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY PRIS PRIORITY
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TEL AVIV 10408

LIMDIS

BRUSSELS FOR USDEL SECRETARY

CAIRO FOR USDEL SECRETARY

E.O.11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, IS
SUBJ: THE MOOD IN ISRAEL ON THE EVE OF CAIRO

1. ISRAEL ON THE EVE OF THE CAIRO CONFERENCE IS FEELING
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A MIXTURE OF CONFUSION AND CONFIDENCE. THERE IS CONFU-
SION BECAUSE NO ONE IS YET QUITE SURE WHAT SADAT IS UP
TO, HOW THE CAIRO CONFERENCE IS GOING TO DEVELOP AND WHAT
HE EXPECTS OF IT. THE CONFIDENCE STEMS FROM A SENSE
THAT THINGS ARE GOING ABOUT AS WELL, FROM AN ISRAELI
POINT OF VIEW, AS ONE COULD HAVE HOPED AND DREAMED.
THE ISRAELI-EGYPTIAN ENTENTE IS DEVELOPING NICELY.

EGYPT IS ISOLATED FROM AND AT ODDS WITH THE PLO AND THE RADICAL ARABS. THE SOVIET UNION SEEMS ALMOST OUT OF THE GAME. AND THERE IS HOPE THAT, AT A LATER MOMENT, EVEN THE MODERATES LIKE JORDAN AND SAUDI ARABIA WILL FALL IN LINE WITH EGYPT. THE UNITED STATES "HAS SEEN THE ERROR OF ITS WAYS," DROPPED ITS WOOING OF THE SYRIANS, THE PLO, AND THE SOVIETS, AND BELATEDLY IF ENTHUSIASTICALLY SUPPORTS THE EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI INITIATIVE.

2. FOR ISRAEL, THE TACTICAL SITUATION IS ALL THEY COULD ASK. ABOVE ALL, THEY HAVE THE EGYPTIANS IN A ONE-ON-ONE BARGAINING SITUATION, ISOLATED FROM EXTREMIST INFLUENCE. BEGIN AND DAYAN HAVE TOLD THE EUROPEANS BLUNTLY, AND WITH SOME APPARENT SUCCESS, TO STOP MEDDLING AND MAKING UNHELPFUL STATEMENTS. EVEN THE AMERICANS ARE AT LEAST TEMPORARILY CONSIGNED TO THE ROLE OF OBSERVERS, OUT OF THE MAINSTREAM OF ISRAEL-EGYPT NEGOTIATIONS. THE ISRAELIS STILL VALUE AMERICAN INVOLVEMENT, WANT US ON HAND, INFORMED, AND PLAYING A SUPPORTIVE ROLE; BUT THEY WANT TO DETERMINE THE EXTENT AND NATURE OF OUR INVOLVEMENT, KEEPING IT AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE LIMITED TO CONSTRUCTIVE SUPPORT OF THEIR OWN EFFORTS.

3. HOWEVER MUCH A MEDIA EVENT IT MAY BE, CAIRO IS PRETTY WELL UNDERSTOOD NOT TO BE THE MAIN EVENT. WITH
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INCREASING FREQUENCY AND ACCURACY, THE TALK IS ABOUT SECRET MEETINGS AT VARIOUS LEVELS IN VARIOUS PLACES. BEGIN AND DAYAN ARE HOLDING VERY TIGHTLY IN THEIR OWN HANDS THE KNOWLEDGE AND CONTROL OF EVENTS. DAYAN CONFIDED IN NO ONE DURING BEGIN'S ABSENCE IN LONDON AND EVEN BEGIN'S "CHEF DE CABINET" BEN-ELISSAR DID NOT KNOW WHAT HE WAS ABOUT. EXCEPT FOR A LITTLE MUTTERING IN THE KNESSET FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE, MOST OTHERS, EVEN IN THE CABINET, SEEM CONTENT OR RESIGNED TO BEING KEPT IN THE DARK.

4. THERE IS NOW VERY LITTLE TALK ABOUT GENEVA AND A SLIGHTLY GLEEFUL SENSE THAT THE AMERICANS ARE NO LONGER DIRECTING THE DIPLOMATIC TIMETABLE. THERE IS, MORE AND MORE OPENLY, TALK OF AN ISRAEL-EGYPT BILATERAL TREATY AS THE POSSIBLE AND DESIRABLE OUTCOME OF THE NEGOTIATIONS -- BUT WITH A HOPE THAT THIS MIGHT BE ONLY THE FIRST STEP TOWARD A SETTLEMENT WITH JORDAN SOMEWHAT FURTHER DOWN THE ROAD.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 TEL AVIV 10408

LIMDIS

BRUSSELS FOR USDEL SECRETARY

CAIRO FOR USDEL SECRETARY

5. ABOUT THE SUBSTANCE OF A SETTLEMENT, THERE IS
NOT MUCH AGREEMENT. AFTER THE FIRST WAVE OF UNEASI-
NESS THAT SADAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN "GIVEN SOMETHING" FOR
HIS JERUSALEM VISIT, THINGS ARE REVERTING TO NORMAL.
EVERYTHING IS NEGOTIABLE, BUT ISRAEL SHOULD NOT TIP
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ITS HAND BEFORE NEGOTIATIONS. IN SPITE OF THE NEW
WARMTH TOWARD SADAT, THE ATTITUDE IS ONE OF TOUGH BAR-

GAINING AT CAIRO OR ELSEWHERE. THERE IS SOME UNEASINESS THAT SADAT MAY MEAN WHAT HE SAYS IN RESTATING A HARD ARAB LINE AND IN HIS COMMITMENT TO A COMPREHENSIVE SETTLEMENT. BUT THIS IS BALANCED BY A BELIEF THAT HE MUST REALIZE THE NEED TO COMPROMISE. THERE IS A DISPOSITION TO THINK THAT A VERY GENEROUS BILATERAL SETTLEMENT ON SINAI IS POSSIBLE. THERE IS MORE TALK ABOUT CONCESSIONS IN THE WEST BANK BUT, INCREASINGLY, IN TERMS OF SOME KIND OF "FUNCTIONAL" COMPROMISE. NO ONE IS QUITE SURE WHAT THAT MEANS. DAYAN IS DELPHIC; THE LABOR PARTY IS INCREASINGLY SPECIFIC. BUT BEGIN HAS GIVEN ABSOLUTELY NO HINT OF HIS VIEWS ON THE SUBJECT.

6. BEGIN HAS PLENTY OF ROOM TO MANEUVER, IN PUBLIC SUPPORT. HIS STANDING IS VERY HIGH, HIS DOMINANCE OF THE GOVERNMENT NEVER GREATER. THE LATEST POLL, TWO WEEKS AFTER THE SADAT VISIT, SHOWS 79 PERCENT BELIEVE NO NEW ELECTIONS ARE NEEDED PRIOR TO CRUCIAL DECISIONS ABOUT PEACE. IT ALSO, HOWEVER, SHOWS STRONG OPPOSITION TO A PALESTINIAN STATE (75 PERCENT); 65 PERCENT NOT PREPARED TO WITHDRAW FROM ALL OR MOST OF THE TERRITORIES EVEN FOR PEACE; AND 73 PERCENT WHO BELIEVE ISRAEL SHOULD INSIST ON DIRECT NEGOTIATIONS WITH EGYPT AND THE OTHER ARABS, REFUSING OUTSIDE MEDIATION. THE PEACE FEVER IS RUNNING SO HIGH, HOWEVER, AND THE SUPPORT FOR BEGIN'S LEADERSHIP IS SO STRONG THAT IF HE TAKES A CONSIDERABLY SOFTER POSITION THAN THOSE FIGURES WOULD SUGGEST, HE WOULD SURELY CARRY THE PUBLIC WITH HIM. A BREAKDOWN OF NEGOTIATIONS OVER PERCEIVED ISRAELI INFLEXIBILITY WOULD BE MORE DIFFICULT FOR HIM TO HANDLE. THE ODOR OF PEACE IS HEADY. ISRAELIS ARE MAKING RESERVATIONS FOR EGYPTIAN TOURS NEXT APRIL; CONFIDENTIAL

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READING ABOUT EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR GHORBAL LIGHTING HANNAKA CANDLES. ISRAELI JOURNALISTS ARE GETTING VISAS AT CAIRO AIRPORT AND WRITING PIECES ON CAIRO ATMOSPHERE THAT ARE READ AVIDLY. THE GOVERNMENT MAY BE ON A PEACE WAVE A LITTLE BIGGER THAN IT WANTS TO RIDE.

7. THE ATMOSPHERE FOR THE SECRETARY'S VISIT IS GOOD. ISRAEL WANTS FROM US, ABOVE ALL, PUBLIC EVIDENCE OF ENTHUSIASTIC SUPPORT FOR THE EGYPT-ISRAEL DIALOGUE, AND VISIT PROVIDES IT. PUBLIC STATEMENTS BY THE PRESIDENT AND THE SECRETARY ABOUT THE TRIP'S PURPOSES HAVE BEEN REASSURING, AFTER CONSIDERABLE INITIAL SUSPICIONS THAT THE TRIP WAS AN EFFORT TO DERAIL THE CAIRO INITIATIVE. ISRAEL WANTS AMERICAN SUPPORT WITHOUT QUALIFICATIONS AS TO THE FORM AND DIRECTION THE EGYPTIAN/ISRAELI DIALOGUE SHOULD TAKE. THE ISRAELIS

ARE A BIT INTOXICATED AT BEING ALONE, OR ALMOST ALONE
WITH THE EGYPTIANS, WITH THE AMERICANS SIMPLY THERE TO
PLAY A CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE WHEN AND AS ISRAEL NEEDS US.
THE ISRAELIS NOW SEE THE SECRETARY'S VISIT, THEREFORE,
AS THE SYMBOL OF AMERICAN BLESSING AND SUPPORT FOR THE
COURSE ON WHICH THEY ARE EMBARKED.
LEWIS

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